A new subspecies of the Slender-billed Miner *Geositta tenuirostris* (Furnariidae) from Ecuador

by Niels Krabbe

Received 15 August 1991

The Slender-billed Miner *Geositta tenuirostris* is confined to the Andes, where it was known from Tucumán province, northwestern Argentina, to Cajamarca department, western Peru. It has been found at altitudes of 2500–4600 m, but mainly occurs on the slopes at the edge of the highlands, at 3000–4000 m. Here it frequents semi-humid country and prefers gently sloping ground with very short grass or matted vegetation, interspersed with patches of bare soil (including small potato fields), and low banks that are used for nesting. Several small areas in the Ecuadorean Andes seem to represent suitable habitat, but the species had never been recorded north of the north Peru low. It was therefore a surprise to find the species on 7 August 1990 on the slopes of Volcán Iliniza in the northern half of Ecuador, almost 1000 km north of the previously known range of the species (and the genus). Two specimens were collected and appear to represent a new subspecies:

Geositta tenuirostris kalimayae subsp. nov.

Type. Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, no. 80062, adult female, province of Cotopaxi, slope on northwestern side of Planadas de Guintza, highest point of new road to Sigchos (00°44′S, 78°45′W), elevation 3350 m; collected by N. Krabbe 7 August 1990. Cotype Museo Ecuatoreano de Ciencias Naturales, Quito, no. 5796, adult male, apparently the mate of the type.

Description. (Capitalised colour names from Ridgway 1912.) Crown, mantle, back, rump, and upper tail-coverts Drab. Wing coverts Bister edged Clay Color. Tertials between Clove Brown and Sepia, edged Pinkish Buff, Tawny along shafts, most so on inner webs. Remiges Tawny with dark markings that are between Clove Brown and Sepia. Outer (1st) remex wholly dark; 2nd–5th with increasing amounts of Tawny at base and on inner webs to 15–20 mm from tips; 5th with outer web narrowly edged Tawny, 6th with 15 mm wide dark tip and with Tawny wash to most of outer web; 7th–10th with a 10 mm wide subterminal dark area; 11th with subterminal band somewhat reduced and only conspicuous as a spot 10 × 5 mm around the shaft; 12th–16th with 2–3 mm wide dark band diagonally from around shaft 5 mm from the tip up along edge of outer web, ending 10 mm from tip of wing coverts. Central (1st) rectrix Bister, pale and faded owing to wear along edges; 2nd Tawny basally on inner web to 10 mm from tip; 3rd Tawny with dark tip 10 mm wide; 4th with 1 mm wide Tawny tip on inner web, and with a dark subterminal band 6 mm wide; 5th similar to 4th, but the dark subterminal band only 3 mm wide but continuously across the web; 6th

TABLE 1
Measurements (mm) and weights (g) of *Geositta tenuirostris*

	Flattened wing	Tail	Bill to skull	Bill to nostrils	Weight
G. t. kalimayae					
♂	107	57	29	19.0	30
♀	101.5	54	28.5	18.2	31
G. t. tenuirostris					
♂♂	110.5	61.0	31.0	21.7	34.3
	(108–113)	(57–66)	(28.7–33)	(20.5–24)	(29–42.5)
♀♀	109.0	57.0	31.1	21.1	33.2
	(104–113)	(53–60)	(29.4–33.5)	(20.2–22.2)	(32–35.5)

Note. For *G. t. tenuirostris*, means and ranges are given. For all measurements, $n = 4$; for weights, $n = 7$ for males, $n = 3$ for females.

rectrix with the outer 30 mm of outer web whitish, base and inner web Tawny with ill-defined dark subterminal band 1.5 mm wide from shaft to edge of inner web, and a faint dusky wash down middle of inner web. Supercilium, mottling on headside, and underparts buffy white, breast-feathers edged Drab, giving a streaked effect. Under wing coverts Tawny. Iris dark brown; bill dark grey, basal part of underside of mandible flesh, gape yellow; feet plumbeous. Weight 30 g, light fat. Skull fully ossified. Brood patch present, but not much vascularised. Largest follicle 1.5 mm. Stomach: insect larvae and imago beetles. Wings 101.5, tail 54, tarsi 23, bill from skull 28.5, bill from anterior edge of nostrils 18.2 mm.

Description of cotype. Identical to the type in colouration of plumage and soft parts. Weight 30 g, no fat. Skull fully ossified. Testes enlarged, 8 × 4 mm. Stomach: insects (larvae and imagos). Wings 107, tail 57, tarsi 24, bill from skull 29, bill from anterior edge of nostrils 19.0 mm.

Diagnosis. G. t. kalimayae differs from nominate *tenuirostris* by being smaller (Table 1) and greyer, averaging more streaked on the breast, and especially by having more extensive dark areas in wings and tail, with the subterminal dark band on the penultimate rectrix stretching across the entire feather, while it is reduced to a broken band, a tiny spot along the shaft, or completely absent in nominate *tenuirostris*. The outer rectrix has an almost complete narrow dark band near the tip and a dusky wash on parts of both webs in *kalimayae*, while this rectrix is completely uniform in most specimens of nominate *tenuirostris*, the exception being three specimens from Cajamarca, that all show a very slight dusky wash on this feather. These three specimens also show more extensive dark markings in the wings and on the penultimate rectrix than specimens from further south. One of them almost matches *kalimayae* in wing-pattern, and they are all intermediate in size with more southerly birds.

Distribution. So far only known from the western side of Planadas de Guintza, where 3 or 4 pairs were easily observed (during strong winds) on 7 and 9 August 1990, at elevations ranging from 3350 to 3500 m. Two subsequent searches for the species at the same site on 17 October 1990

and 3 January 1991 proved negative, either because there was no wind and the birds thus preferred to walk away, or because the birds were elsewhere at the time. Searches in apparently suitable habitat on 18 August 1990 along the Ambato-Guaranda road on the north slope of Volcán Chimborazo, and 3 January 1991 along the Latacunga-Zumbahua road likewise proved negative, although the species may occur at these latter sites in such low density as to go undetected. The low and humid páramos of southern Ecuador presently form an effective barrier between the ranges of *tenuirostris* and *kalimayae*.

Etymology. I take pleasure in naming this bird after my at the time 4-year-old daughter Kalimaya, whose presence during the second visit to the type-locality may have prevented attacks by the local indians.

Habitat. On 7 and 9 August 1990 the type locality was very windy, and dust and sand from Planadas de Guintza, a pumice flat, had accumulated as dunes in places just behind the ridges of the hills to the west and northwest of the plain. The higher ridges had bunch grass (that was being burnt at the time), but at the pass there were fields with potato and *Rumex acetosella* as well as large areas matted with *Lachemilla*. The miners were seen on the matted slopes, and on the fields and bare patches. Here they shared the habitat with *Metriopelia melanoptera, Muscisaxicola maculirostris, Anthus bogotensis* and *Phrygilus unicolor*, all widespread, but confined to the high Andes. In bunch grass areas nearby *Asthenes wyatti* was noted, and in a row of bushes growing up the slope *Turdus fuscater*, *Diglossa humeralis* and *Zonotrichia capensis* occurred, also all widespread high Andean taxa.

Natural history. Typically for the species, it was found in pairs, flew high and far when flushed, and was fairly shy. Some singing was heard while the birds were swooping low over the slopes. Normally it rises to considerable heights during the nuptial flight, but this may have been inhibited by the strong winds. Calls were given by all birds, both during take-off and upon and just after landing. Three or four pairs were seen in two areas with altogether 1 km^2 of suitable habitat. The only known nest of the species was in a hole in a bank (Salvador *et al.* 1984), but it was not known whether it was dug by the bird itself, or by a *Notiochelidon cyanoleuca* or an earthcreeper (*Upucerthia*) (T. Narosky, pers. comm.). Although it was neither found at the type-locality of *G. t. kalimayae* nor recorded on the adjacent slope of Volcán Iliniza, *Cinclodes excelsior*, which digs its own tunnels, is common on the nearby mountains Corazón, Cotopaxi and Chimborazo.

Acknowledgements

For good companionship in the field I thank J. Live, P. Prado, and M. Yacelga (first visit), A. Holst and K. Krabbe (second visit), and Fernando and Francisco Sornoza (third visit). The field work was generously funded by H.K.H. Kronprins Frederiks Fond and Dr. Bøje Benzons Fond, Zoological Museum of Copenhagen. I am grateful to J. V. Remsen, Louisiana State University, for sending me the weights of their specimens, and to E. R. Blake, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, for loans of their specimens. J. Fjeldså kindly commented on the manuscript.

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Address: Niels Krabbe, Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, Universitetsparken 15, DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark.

Notes on distribution and natural history of some poorly known Ecuadorean birds

by Niels Krabbe

Received 15 August 1991

From July 1990 to May 1991, during my first of four years of ornithological field work in Ecuador, work primarily aimed at mapping the distribution of high Andean birds, several observations worth publishing separately from the main report were made. Some of these are described below. Specimens are deposited in Museo Ecuatoriano de Ciencias Naturales (MECN), Quito, Zoological Museum University of Copenhagen (ZMUC), and Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia (ANSP). Tape-recordings are deposited at the British Library of Natural Sounds, London, and Bioakustisk Laboratorium, University of Århus, Denmark.

NOBLE SNIPE *Gallinago nobilis*

Noble Snipe were recorded on Páramo El Angel on two occasions in December 1990 (and one bird collected for identification), and on the páramo south of Volcán Cotopaxi in Janury 1991. The vocalizations heard from the rush beds in Laguna del Limpio on Volcán Cotopaxi on 9 October 1983 at a site where several Noble Snipe had just landed, were in fact partly referable to the song of a Lesser Rail *Rallus limicola aequatorialis*, and partly to what seems to be a call given from the ground by the (female ?) Noble Snipe, and was not, as believed then, a lek song of the Noble Snipe (*contra* Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990: 178). A winnowing resembling that of the Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* was emitted by Noble Snipe during roding in wide circles at dusk and early dawn. M. Hall informs me (verbally 1991) that in moonlight it may rode during most of the night. Synchronous with the winnowing, a loud chipping, much like that given by *G. gallinago* and *G. jamesoni*, was given from the ground, presumably by the female Noble Snipe. The only other vocalization recorded from the Noble Snipe was the rasping call invariably given upon take-off, both day and night.

IMPERIAL SNIPE *Gallinago imperialis*

Two roding birds were tape-recorded and seen on the west slope of Loma Yanayacu on the north slope of Volcán Pichincha at dusk (18.25–19.00) on 17 and 19 December 1990, and (one bird only) again on 10